

Testimony of Kelly Flores, CI and CT, RID Region III Representative
Certified Sign Language Interpreter
2/27/07

- I speak in support of this bill.
- I would like to speak to you about two things: Economics and the value of certification.
- Right now hiring entities that choose to bring in unqualified interpreters – and pay them less – have an unfair economic advantage. When this bill becomes law, they would no longer be able to do this.
- Those entities that are doing the right thing and hiring qualified interpreters are at an economic disadvantage, but they choose to do so anyways. This bill would validate their choices and protect them as, at the same time, it penalizes those who choose to hire unqualified interpreters.
- This bill broadens the protection of the rights of people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind. It also protects hiring entities, and protects qualified interpreters. For the first time, all people, deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, interpreters, hiring entities and the general public will have a law, once passed, that is very clear and concise, both in the requirements of provision of interpreters in Michigan, but also in the penalties for ignoring this legislation.
- Interpreting is a complex process that requires a high degree of linguistic, cognitive and technical skills.
- Professional sign language interpreters develop interpreting skills through extensive training and practice over a long period of time.
- Sign language interpreting is a highly specialized field; simply knowing both sign language and English does not qualify a person as an interpreter.
- The professional sign language interpreter should be able to adjust to a broad range of Deaf consumer preferences and/or needs for interpretation.
- Certification in itself is not just a test; for professional interpreters it embodies three key components: education, in the form of requiring continuing education units a degree requirement was instituted for those seeking national certification. This will phase in starting in 2008. Standards, in the form of certification testing and a code of professional conduct, and excellence – the establishment of interpreters as professionals, and the challenge to qualified interpreters to continue to improve their skills.
- In closing, RID supports legislation that protects the rights of all people involved in the interpretation process and legislation that furthers the view of qualified sign language interpreters as professionals. I speak in support of this bill, and I thank you for your work in this endeavor.



Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

Benefits of the Utilization of Certified Interpreters

- Interpreting is a complex process that requires a high degree of linguistic, cognitive and technical skills.
- Professional sign language interpreters develop interpreting skills through extensive training and practice over a long period of time.
- Sign language interpreting is a highly specialized field; simply knowing both sign language and English does not qualify a person as an interpreter.
- The professional sign language interpreter should be able to adjust to a broad range of Deaf consumer preferences and/or needs for interpretation: some deaf individuals use American Sign Language, a natural language with its own grammar and structure that is distinct from English; others prefer a form of signing that is more closely follows the grammar and structure of spoken English.
- In the field of interpreting, holding appropriate certification is an important indicator of an interpreter's qualifications and skill level. This is similar to other professional settings such as legal, medical, accounting and more.
- The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) awards certification to interpreters who successfully pass national tests – tests that assess not only language knowledge and communication skills, but also knowledge and judgment on issues of ethics, culture and professionalism.
- Certification establishes a national standard of quality for interpreters and helps to ensure equal access to communication to the Deaf community.
- Certification provides evidence to consumers and employers that the certified individual has met the national standard for the knowledge and skill that exemplifies the interpreting profession. Certified individuals demonstrate mastery of a broad range of knowledge, skill and technique to provide quality communication access for the Deaf and hard of hearing community.
- Because certification is voluntary, the choice to become certified demonstrates individual pride in the profession, the desire to be recognized for mastery of interpreting skill and an ongoing commitment to quality communication. Certification can be a means for upward mobility, a condition for employment, a route to higher pay and a source of recognition by peers.

- As in other professions, RID certified interpreters must adhere to high standards of professionalism and ethical conduct by following the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct. Embodied in the Code of Professional Conduct are seven tenets setting forth guiding principles. The tenets of the Code of Professional Conduct are to be viewed holistically and as a guide to professional behavior. They include the following:
- TENETS
 1. Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.
 2. Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.
 3. Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.
 4. Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.
 5. Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.
 6. Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.
 7. Interpreters engage in professional development.
- Maintaining and elevating one's skill level is also an important component of certification. Through RID's Certification Maintenance Program (CMP) certified interpreters are required to continue skill development and education on an on-going basis.
- Certification Maintenance is a way of ensuring that practitioners maintain their skill levels and keep up with developments in the interpreting field, thereby assuring consumers that a certified interpreter provides quality interpreting services. Participation in the Certification Maintenance Program is required of all RID Certified interpreters, and retention of one's certificate(s) is dependent upon successful completion of each CMP cycle.
- Like many educational and professional associations, RID requires participants to earn a specific number of continuing education units (CEUs). The CEU is a nationally recognized unit of measurement for educational activities that meet established criteria for increasing knowledge and competency.
- Certification for interpreters embodies three key components: education, standards and excellence. It is a tri-fold approach that ensures not only equal access in communication but also quality access in communication for the deaf and hard of hearing.